

Congresswoman Kaptur announced that the new regulations from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) could make hundreds of Vietnam veterans from the Ninth Congressional District eligible for health care and disability benefits due to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides.

“We urge our Vietnam veterans to contact us regarding these new rules, even if they have been denied in the past,” she said. “If they suffer from certain diseases, they will now have an easier path to access the quality health care and disability compensation they deserve.”

Veterans who served in Vietnam anytime during the period from January 9, 1962 through May 7, 1975 are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides. Congresswoman Kaptur stated that the VA has now determined that evidence supports expanding the list of health problems that the agency will presume to be related to Agent Orange and other herbicides.

In technical terms, the agency will award “a presumption of service connection” for:

- **Ischemic heart disease**
- **Parkinson’s disease**
- **All chronic B cell leukemias**, such as hairy cell leukemia

In practical terms, Congresswoman Kaptur said that Vietnam veterans who have a “presumed” illness need not prove an association between their medical problems and their military service. By helping veterans overcome evidentiary requirements that might otherwise present significant challenges, this “presumption” simplifies and speeds up the application process, so that the veterans receive any benefits they deserve.

Congresswoman Kaptur estimated that more than 500 veterans in the Ninth Congressional District will either submit Agent Orange claims over the next 18 months or resubmit previously-denied claims that will be reviewed by the VA for service connection for the three conditions.

She said this historic regulation will be implemented after a 60-day congressional review process that will be completed in late October. After which, the VA will begin providing benefits for new claims and may award benefits retroactively for earlier periods.

Congresswoman Kaptur encourages all Vietnam veterans with these three diseases to contact her office at (800) 964-4699 or the VA at 1-888-GIBILL1 for assistance in applying for access to VA health care and compensation, so the VA can begin development of their claims.